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Originalbeitrag erschienen in:
Bulletin d'archéologie et d'architecture libanaises 10 (2006), S. 85-96

BAAL 10, 2006
Pp. 85-96

Notes on the 2005 Season at Kamid el-Loz – From the Romans to the Late Bronze Age

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*In 2005 the excavations have been concentrated on the East Slope, areas II-e- 6/ 7/ 8 and II-f-8 as well as on the so-called Palace Area and its immediate surrounding (areas III-a-12-15) (**Fig. 1**). At the East Slope our research focused on the Roman, Hellenistic and Iron Age III (Persian) cemetery and on the Iron Age I and Late Bronze Age II houses. The investigations in the Palace Area ought to provide us with further information about the settlement history, the settlement structure and functions in this area of the site[1].*

The East Slope

Roman Sarcophagus in area II-e-6-/7

The excavations at Kamid el-Loz, carried out between 1997 and 2005, exposed one of the very few known Roman settlements in the region. The houses preserved here (II-e/f/g-6/7/8), provide an insight into aspects of the settlement activities at Kamid el-Loz during the Roman period. An associated cemetery was located in the direct vicinity of this living area.

In 2005 our focus initially concentrated on the Roman burial customs. While cleaning a section in the southern part of area II-e-6/7, the third stone sarcophagus in this area was uncovered (**Fig. 2**). The sarcophagus, oriented approximately east-west, had been placed north of the Roman House II[2]: The dimensions of the coffin were 2,14 m in length, 0,76 m in width and 0, 94 m in height. It was made of white lime-stone and was covered with a lid which formed a gable roof (height of the lid: 0, 21 m).

Both long sides as well as one of the small sides of the sarcophagus have been decorated with frames carved into the stone. At the second small side a lion head was applied, embossed three-dimensional, with eyes and mouth wide open, showing four canine teeth and the tongue. The mane was arranged like a ray around his head.

The sarcophagus contained the body of a male adult person. The dead had been placed on his back, arms and legs stretched. The bones were in a friable condition, the skull was nearly destroyed. No grave goods had been given to the deceased, only the nails of his shoes were preserved.

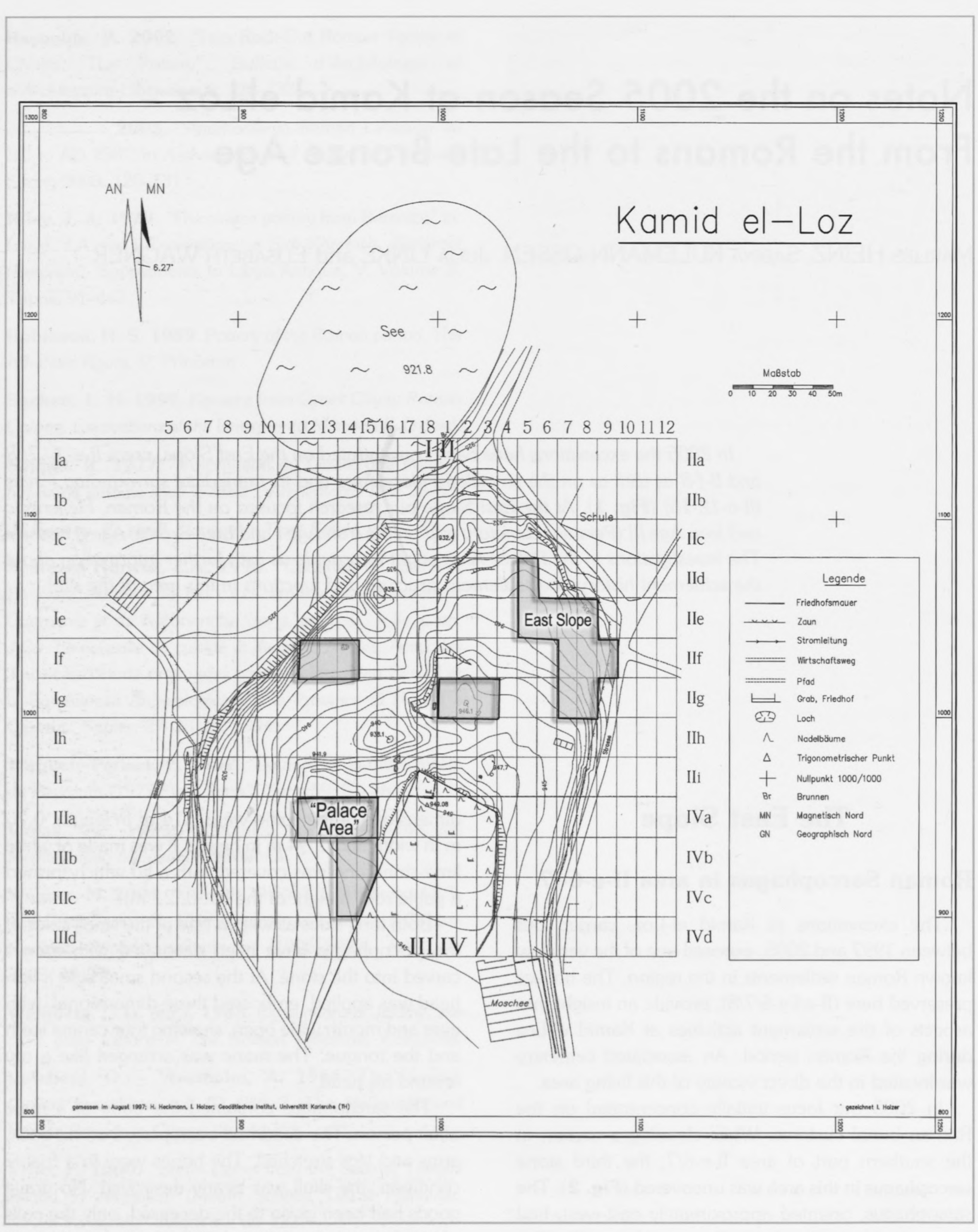


Fig. 1- Topographic plan of Kamid el-Loz with excavation areas.



Fig. 2- Roman Sarcophagus from area II-e-6-/7.

Burials of the Iron Age III (Persian) and Hellenistic Period

Areas II-e-6 and II-e-7 had already been used as a cemetery during the Persian period. About 24 graves have been discovered, enlarging the Persian cemetery that had been excavated in the western part of the site during the excavations of the University of Saarbrücken. According to their stratigraphical situation, some of the graves in areas II-e-6 and II-e-7 should rather be considered as Hellenistic.

The dead were either lying on their back, in some cases with one arm across the breast, or were laid down on their sides with crouched legs. Mainly adult persons have been buried in this part of the cemetery, in the majority of cases without grave goods. Two exceptions shall be mentioned here:

The first is the burial of an infant, lying on its side in a foetal position (grave number 11). The grave pit could not be detected. The infant was provided with a small pottery vessel, more precisely a feeding bottle, copying the form of the female breast. Grave 11 most likely belongs to the Hellenistic burials of this area (**Fig. 3**).

The second grave to be mentioned is the burial of an adult female, lying on her back, the arms stretched parallel to her body (grave number 17). The bones of the skeleton were in a rather good condition, although the skull had been destroyed. The grave had been encircled by stones, grave and body were oriented roughly east–west with the head aligned to the east. The woman had been buried with quite a substantial amount of grave goods. She wore a necklace of silver



Fig. 3- Grave 11, burial of an infant.

and agate pearls, a bronze fibula and a massive ring of bronze on each ankle (**Fig. 4**). Furthermore, a



Fig. 4- Grave 17, burial of an adult female.

limestone scarab had been deposited close to her head. The grave goods find many parallels within the Persian cemetery of the older Kamid el-Loz excavations.

The Iron Age I and Late Bronze Age II Houses

The Iron Age III graves were dug into structures that had already been built at the very end of the Late Bronze Age (House 2) and at the beginning of the Iron Age (House 1). They continued to be in use during the Iron Age I period (1200-1000 B.C.). Two houses have so far been partly excavated in areas II-e-6 and II-e-7 (**Fig. 5**).

House 1 (II-e-6) consisted of a single room with an associated courtyard area. The layout of the latter had been modified during its use.

According to the so far explored structures, House 2 (II-e-7) was larger than House 1. The layout of the house changed during its utilization. Both houses had been used for household activities, recognizable due to the *tannours*, cooking vessels (**Pl. 1**) and other installations like work surfaces.

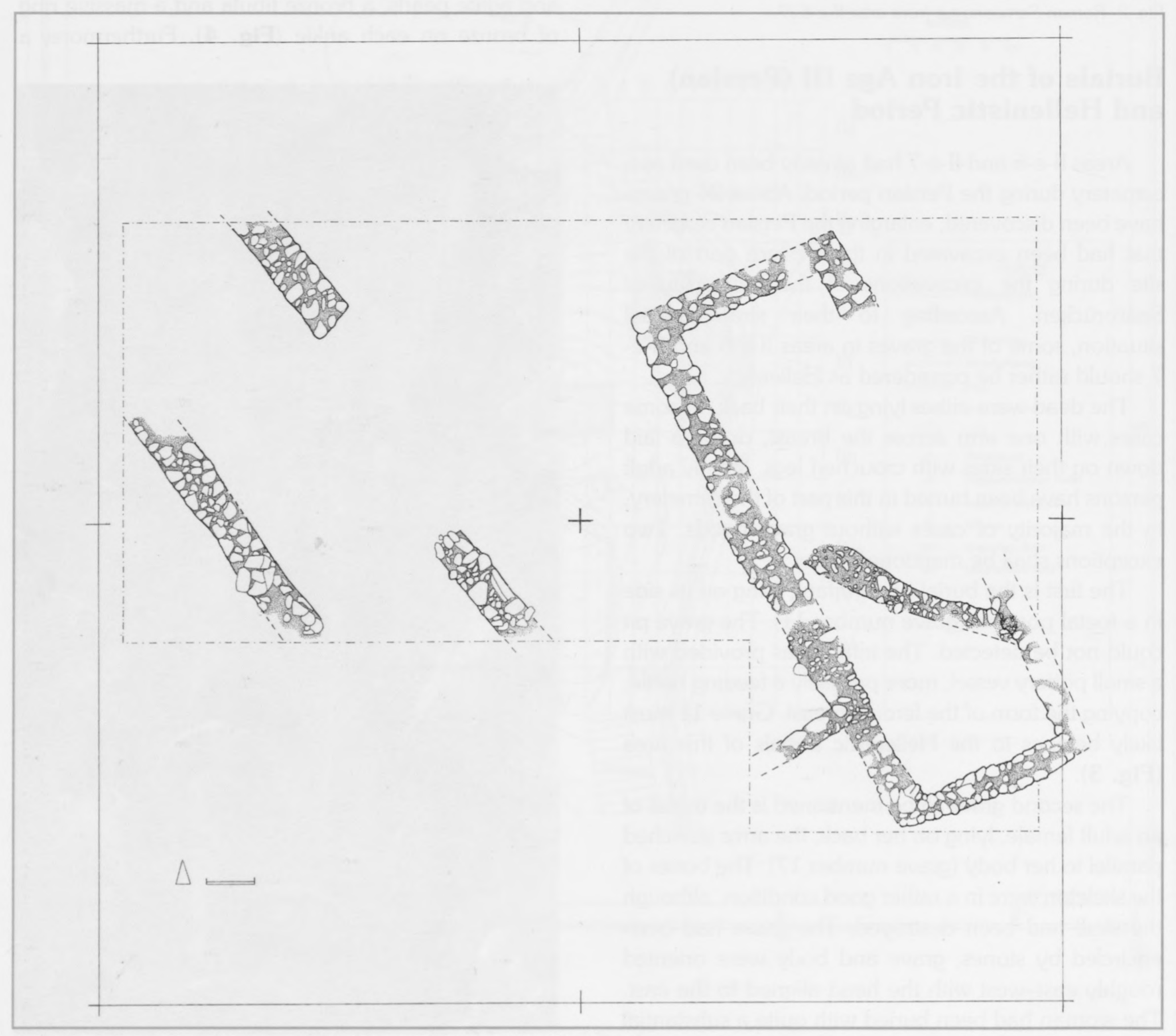
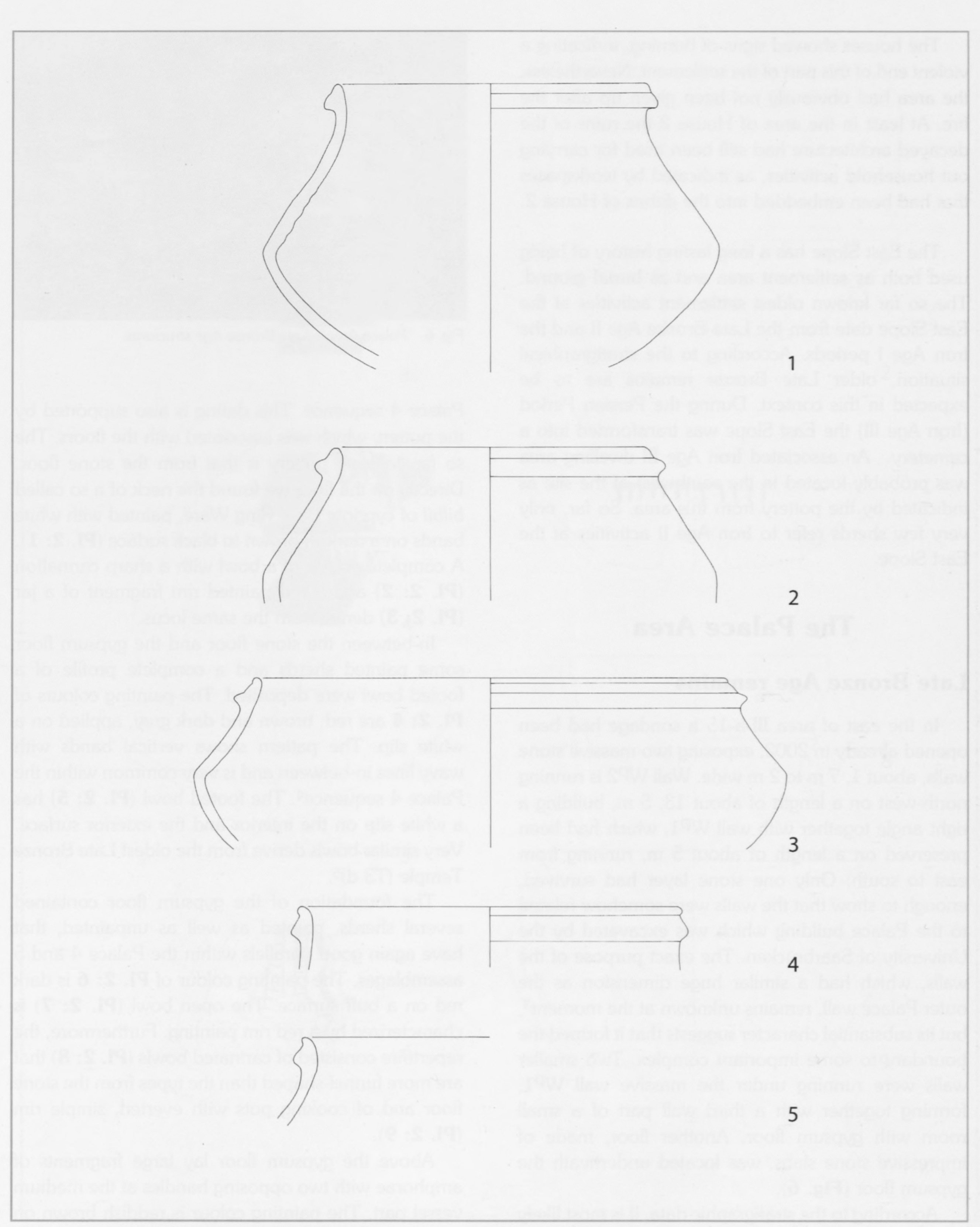


Fig. 5- The houses 1 and 2 during the Iron Age in the Areas II-e-6 and II-e-7.



Pl. 1- Iron Age I cooking pots from the East Slope (scale 1: 3).

The houses showed signs of burning, indicating a violent end of this part of the settlement. Nevertheless, the area had obviously not been given up after the fire. At least in the area of House 2 the ruins of the decayed architecture had still been used for carrying out household activities, as indicated by workspaces that had been embedded into the debris of House 2.

The East Slope has a long lasting history of being used both as settlement area and as burial ground. The so far known oldest settlement activities at the East Slope date from the Late Bronze Age II and the Iron Age I periods. According to the stratigraphical situation, older Late Bronze remains are to be expected in this context. During the Persian Period (Iron Age III) the East Slope was transformed into a cemetery. An associated Iron Age III dwelling area was probably located in the southwest of the site as indicated by the pottery from this area. So far, only very few sherds refer to Iron Age II activities at the East Slope.

The Palace Area

Late Bronze Age remains

In the east of area III-a-15 a sondage had been opened already in 2002, exposing two massive stone walls, about 1, 7 m to 2 m wide. Wall $W^{P}2$ is running north-west on a length of about 13, 5 m, building a right angle together with wall $W^{P}1$, which had been preserved on a length of about 5 m, running from east to south. Only one stone layer had survived, enough to show that the walls were somehow related to the Palace building which was excavated by the University of Saarbrücken. The exact purpose of the walls, which had a similar huge dimension as the outer Palace wall, remains unknown at the moment[3], but its substantial character suggests that it formed the boundary to some important complex. Two smaller walls were running under the massive wall $W^{P}1$, forming together with a third wall part of a small room with gypsum floor. Another floor, made of impressive stone slabs, was located underneath the gypsum floor (**Fig. 6**).

According to the stratigraphic data, it is most likely that these structures are to be correlated with the



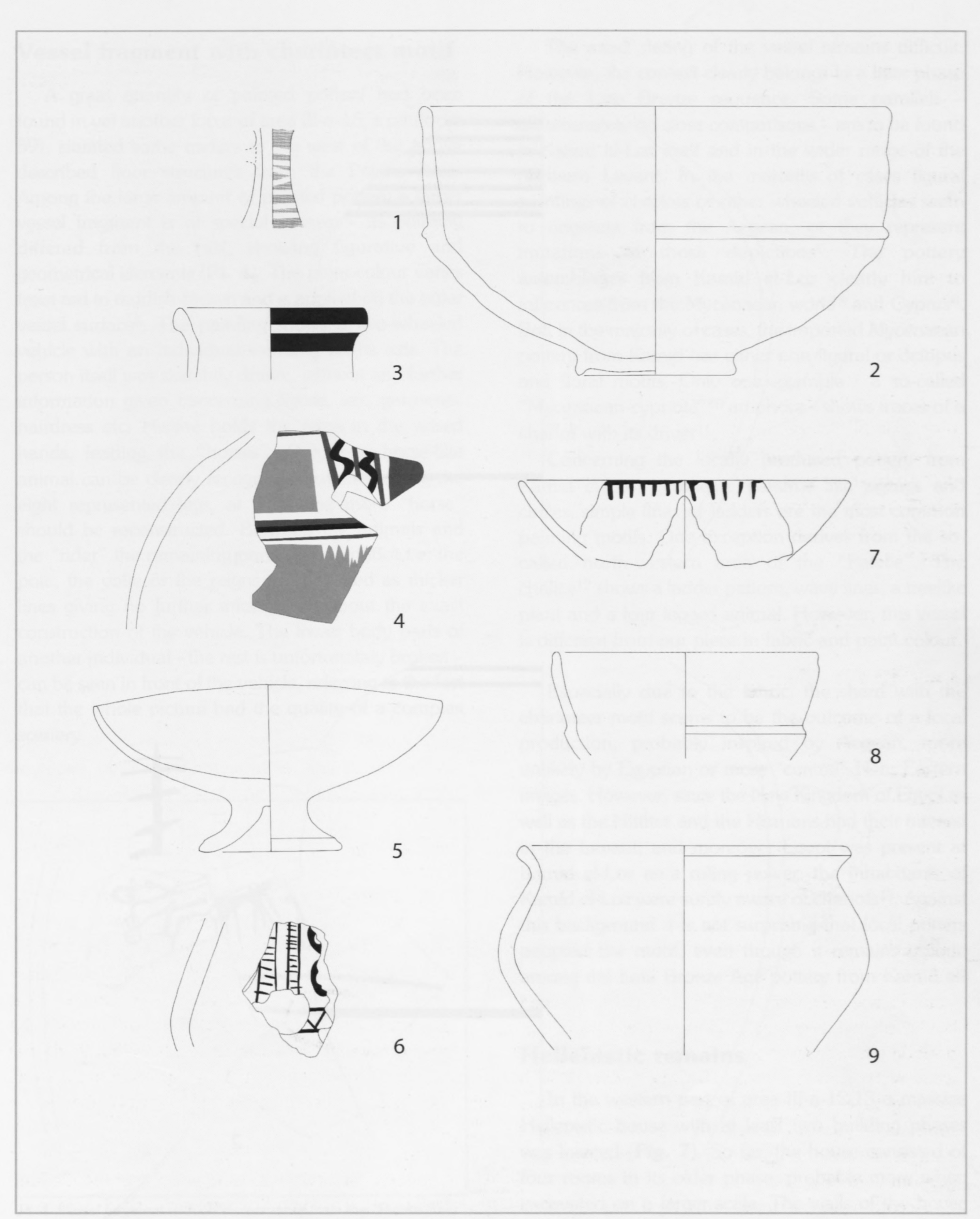
Fig. 6- "Palace Area": Late Bronze Age structures.

Palace 4 sequence. This dating is also supported by the pottery which was associated with the floors. The so far "oldest" pottery is that from the stone floor. Directly on the floor we found the neck of a so called *bilbil* of cypriote Base Ring Ware, painted with white bands on a darkish brown to black surface (**Pl. 2: 1**). A complete profile of a bowl with a sharp carination (**Pl. 2: 2**) and a red painted rim fragment of a jar (**Pl. 2: 3**) derive from the same locus.

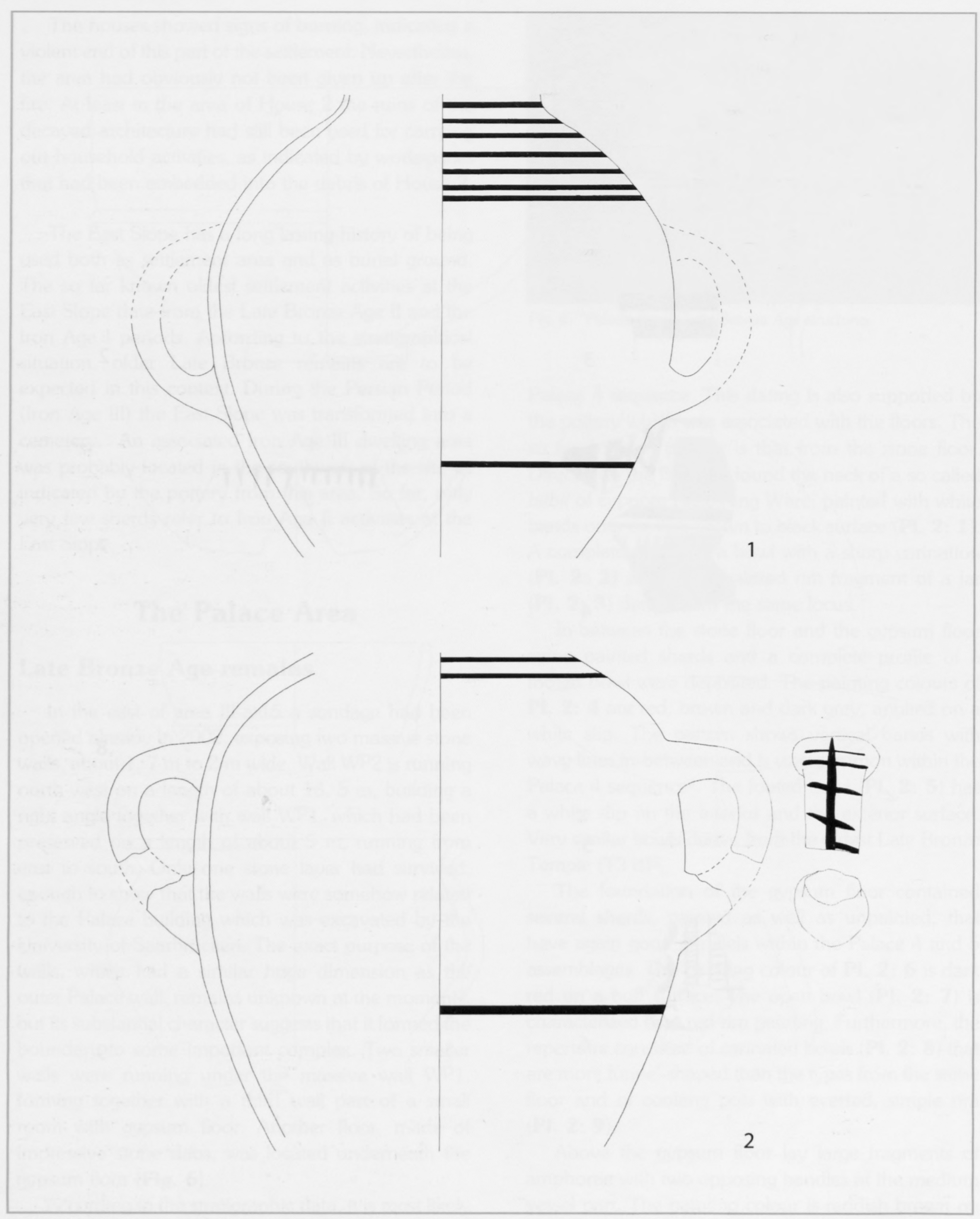
In-between the stone floor and the gypsum floor some painted sherds and a complete profile of a footed bowl were deposited. The painting colours of **Pl. 2: 4** are red, brown and dark grey, applied on a white slip. The pattern shows vertical bands with wavy lines in-between and is very common within the Palace 4 sequence[4]. The footed bowl (**Pl. 2: 5**) has a white slip on the interior and the exterior surface. Very similar bowls derive from the oldest Late Bronze Temple (T3 d)[5].

The foundation of the gypsum floor contained several sherds, painted as well as unpainted, that have again good parallels within the Palace 4 and 5 assemblages. The painting colour of **Pl. 2: 6** is dark red on a buff surface. The open bowl (**Pl. 2: 7**) is characterized by a red rim painting. Furthermore, the repertoire consisted of carinated bowls (**Pl. 2: 8**) that are more funnel-shaped than the types from the stone floor and of cooking pots with everted, simple rim (**Pl. 2: 9**).

Above the gypsum floor lay large fragments of amphorae with two opposing handles at the medium vessel part. The painting colour is reddish brown on a grey-reddish, slipped surface (**Pl. 3**).



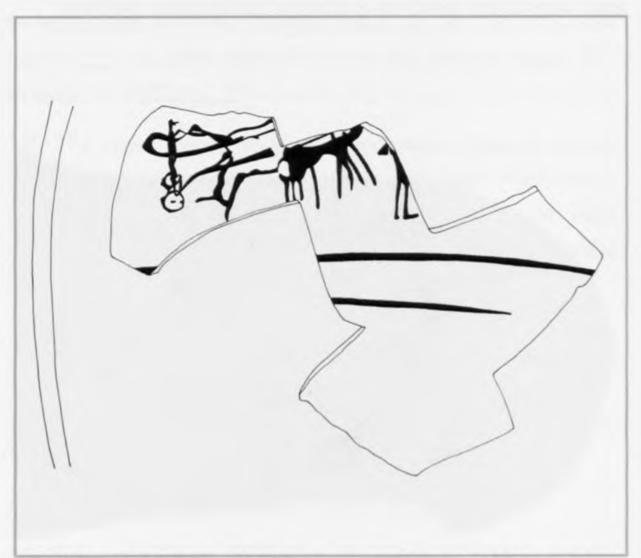
Pl. 2- Late Bronze Age pottery from the "Palace Area" (scale 1: 3).



Pl. 3- Late Bronze Age pottery from the "Palace Area" (scale 1: 3).

Vessel fragment with charioteer motif

A great quantity of painted pottery had been found in yet another locus of area III-a-15, a pit (locus 59), situated some meters to the west of the above described floor structures from the Palace Area. Among the large amount of painted pottery a larger vessel fragment is of special interest - its painting differed from the rest, showing figurative and geometrical elements (**Pl. 4**). The paint colour varies from red to reddish-brown and is applied on the outer vessel surface[6]. The painting shows a two-wheeled vehicle with an individual standing on its axis. The person itself was sketchily drawn, without any further information given concerning figure, sex, garments, hairdress etc. He/she holds the reins in the raised hands, leading the "horses". Only one horse-like animal can be clearly recognized but concerning the eight represented legs, at least one more "horse" should be reconstructed. Between the animals and the "rider" the remaining parts of the chariot i.e. the pole, the yoke or the reigns are depicted as thicker lines giving no further information about the exact construction of the vehicle. The lower body parts of another individual - the rest is unfortunately broken – can be seen in front of the vehicle, referring to the fact that the whole picture had the quality of a complex scenery.



Pl. 4- Vessel fragment with charioteer motif from the "Palace Area" (scale 1: 3).

The exact dating of the vessel remains difficult. However, the context clearly belongs to a later phase of the Late Bronze sequence. Some parallels – unfortunately no close comparisons – are to be found in Kamid el-Loz itself and in the wider range of the northern Levant. In the majority of cases figural paintings of chariots or other wheeled vehicles seem to originate from the Aegean, or they represent imitations of those depictions[7]. The pottery assemblages from Kamid el-Loz clearly hint to influences from the Mycenaean world[8] and Cyprus[9]. But, in the majority of cases, the imported Mycenaean pottery from Kamid has either non-figural or octopus and floral motifs. Only one example - a so-called "Mycenaean-cypriote"[10] amphora - shows traces of a chariot with its driver[11].

Concerning the locally produced pottery from Kamid el-Loz, geometric patterns like zigzags and circles, simple lines or ladders are the most common painting motifs. One exception derives from the so-called north-western area of the "Palace". The chalice[12] shows a ladder pattern, wavy lines, a treelike plant and a four legged animal. However, this vessel is different from our piece in fabric and paint colour.

Especially due to the fabric, the sherd with the charioteer motif seems to be the outcome of a local production, probably inspired by Aegean, more unlikely by Egyptian or more "central" Near Eastern images. However, since the New Kingdom of Egypt as well as the Hittites and the Hurrians had their interest in the Levant, and moreover Egypt was present at Kamid el-Loz as a ruling power, the inhabitants of Kamid el-Loz were surely aware of chariots[13]. Against this background it is not surprising that local potters adopted the motif, even though it remains unique among the Late Bronze Age pottery from Kamid el-Loz.

Hellenistic remains

In the western part of area III-a-12/13 a massive Hellenistic house with at least two building phases was located (**Fig. 7**). So far, the house consisted of four rooms in its older phase, probably more when excavated on a larger scale. The walls of the house have been built with roughly cut stones, preserved up



Fig. 7- "Palace Area": Hellenistic structures.

to a height of one meter. After a period of unknown length a modification of the house took place, changing its inner layout. Neither in phase 1 nor in phase 2 the house had any installations that provided evidence for household- or other activities.

The pottery analysis shows that Kamid el-Loz was involved in long-distance trade relations during the 2nd century B.C. The great amount of Hellenistic pottery found in 2005 contained two inscribed handles of a Rhodian Amphora. One inscription informs about trade in "the time of Archembrot", as well as it holds the name "Hyakinthios" (**Fig. 8**).

While "Archembrotos" stands for the name of a Heliospriest, a name which in Rhodos had been untilized to label a year, the Rhodian calendar denominates a month with the name "Hyakinthios". As M. Leicht has shown, the type and content of the inscriptions together with the vessel shape date around 150 B.C.[14].

The house had been abandoned after phase 2 and was then used as a dump for broken pottery.



Fig. 8- Rhodian Handle.

Notes

1- This report gives a short overview of the 2005 results. A detailed report on the results from the recent series of excavations (1997–2007) is in preparation for *BAAL*, Hors-Série.

2- See Heinz, M. *et al.* 2004, 86 ff.

3- Meanwhile after the season 2007 results we can explain the building development of the area – new palace - structures, dating to the Middle - and Late Bronze Age have been excavated – see report in *BAAL*, Hors Série - forthcoming.

4- Adler, W., Penner S. 2001, pl. 51.

5- Metzger, M. 1993, pl. 78/4.

6- Size and reconstructed diameter of the vessel suggest a storage function. No burning traces refer to an exposure of the vessel to any kind of fire at all. The ware can be defined as middle fine with mineral and organic (straw) inclusions. The interior of the wheel made vessel shows smoothing traces. The core's colour is almost black. The outer surface is covered with a thin pinkish-white slip running from top down.

7- Capet, E. 2003, fig. 12; Günther, W. 2000, pl. 7: 1a.

8- Metzger, M. 1993, pl. 131: Rhyton Nr. 394; pl. 130: Rhyton Nr. 396; pl. 129 Nr. 901.

9- Milk bowls from the Temple: idem. op. cit., Nr. 818, 864 and others: pl. 140: Milk bowl from the Palace: Adler, W., Penner, S. 2001, pl. 67.

10- The classification itself as Mycenaean-Cypriote seems quite uncertain, since the so called Levantine-Mycenaean pottery (i.e. cypriote mycenaean) is a topic of very controversial discussions and only body sherds of the vessel in question have been found.

11- Adler, W., Penner S. op. cit., p. 115, pl. 106/12: Nr 525/623.

12- Metzger, M. op. cit., Textband, p. 246, Nr. 595; Tafelband pl. 160/3.

13- See Heinz, M. 2000 and Heinz, M. 2002.

14- Kulemann-Ossen, S., Leicht, M., Heinz, M. (2007–2008).

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